

2 – King, Champion, Brother and Priest // Hebrews 2:5–18

// *Christ is Better*

Announcement: Happy Mother’s Day—all our mothers, at every campus, stand up?

Introduction:

- Week 2 of our study through the book of Hebrews. As I told you last week, the writer is writing to a group of people who are struggling for various reasons with their faith—bottom line is that they are having trouble following through. They don’t hate Jesus; they know there’s something about Him that is true, but they’re just struggling to go all the way.
- And I told you that some of you know what that’s like... You wish you were stronger in your faith but it’s just hard. You find yourself pulled in so many different directions and it’s so easy to get distracted and bottom line is it’s just hard to stay committed to a God that is invisible.

The writer has basically one message that he keeps coming back to: “Look to Jesus!” That’s a phrase that appears over and over in Hebrews. “But we see Jesus,” “looking unto Jesus” or “fix your eyes on Jesus.”

That’s precisely what the writer is doing here in chapter 2. He gives **four different pictures** of Jesus. Four pictures that, if you see them correctly, will make all the difference in your walk of faith.

First, let’s just read the passage. I’ll point out a few things along the way, and then I’ll give you the 4 pictures.

- You ever notice I preach 2 sermons each time? That’s on purpose. Want to help you learn to read the word of God better. Then I want to tell you what the Spirit of God is saying to us; to you, through it.

Hebrews 2:5–18

[5] For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. [6] It has been testified somewhere,

- (I love this... is this a senior moment? Somewhere back there... The guy quotes Psalm 8 perfectly, so his memory is fine. There’s something lost in translation there: it has been testified “at a certain place”: Psalm 8, to be specific.)

“What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? [7] You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, [8] putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.

That’s a pretty amazing statement: God made the world for humans. All of creation was supposed to be under our control. It was made for us.

For a little while, we were made lower than the angels. But a little while means it was just temporary. Say a king has a son, and for a while he’s under tutors... who is higher? Just for a little while the tutor is, but the destiny of that son ultimately is to be in control of the whole country.

That’s a pretty amazing thought, right? We are to be higher in privilege and position and glory than the angels!

- Whenever an angel is shown in Scripture, they are so glorious and beautiful and terrifying that the first words out of their mouth are always, “Do not fear.” (They don’t

show up chubby and naked with a diaper and a small bow and arrow. That's just stupid Christian art.) They show up and they're like, "Wait! Don't die!"

- Everybody look to your right and your left right now, and think this: that person (if they know Jesus) is destined to be higher; to be more beautiful; to have more glory and more power than Gabriel or Michael the archangel. (Hard to believe, huh? Some of you are taking a 2nd glance... You're like, 'no way.' Believe it, my friend.)

And now comes the understatement of the year:

At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

- Is all of creation subject to man? Is he in control of all of it? Hardly.
- In the past century, 100 million people died of unnatural causes apart from war or disease or natural disaster. That means 100 million people died of crime, genocide or starvation (not counting war or disease).
- We've seen how fragile even the strongest economies can be. And no solution we come up with seems to be perfect:
 - People on the right are like, "government is the problem!" But then we all know stories of corporations abusing their freedom and hurting the economy.
 - So then people on the left are like, "no, business is the problem," we need to regulate and so they create these huge, corrupt bureaucracies which end up being more harmful than the businesses they . (And I'm not saying that all governmental systems are the same, just that none of them really seems to completely fix the problem!)
 - Other people say, "Education is the answer!" And yeah, education fixes some things, but it also produces a lot of pride, snobbery and more sophisticated sins.
- So we look around and, **at present, we do not see everything in subjection to man.** And, honestly, that creates a problem for people. In fact, I would say the greatest (the #1) apologetic

problem people have with Christianity. We know, instinctively, that we should be on top of the world, but we're not; if anything, the world seems to be on top of us. And so we say, "Why is there so much evil in the world? Why tsunamis? Why so much heartache and abuse?" We ask that because we know we're destined for more!

So the writer says, "No, we don't see the world under our feet..."

[9] But we see **him** who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, **crowned** with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

[10] For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the **founder** of their salvation perfect through suffering... [11] For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.

That is why he is not ashamed to call them **brothers**... [14] Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

[16] For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the **offspring of Abraham.** (amazing statement; we'll come back to that)

[17] Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful **high priest** in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. [18] For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

4 beautiful pictures of Jesus

He is...

1. **A king who got involved (2:9)**

- *Tim Keller* tells the story here of the **1964** murder of Kitty Genovese in Manhattan. Famous story... A mugger came up to her and stabbed her. She screamed, "Oh my God, he stabbed me." Lights came on; people looked out their windows. The mugger backed away. But nobody came to her help. Nobody wanted to put themselves in harm's way. It was documented that 37 people saw this but nobody got involved. When the assailant saw that no one was coming to help her, he came back to where she had dragged herself into an alley, killed her, and took \$49 from her purse. Nobody wanted to get involved; nobody wanted to put themselves at risk to help her.
- Jesus was a King who got involved. And he didn't just do it at the risk of his life, he did it at the cost of his life.
- He tasted death for each of us. And it wasn't like we were just innocently being mugged, like the girls in the story. We deserved punishment; Jesus took it.
- Imagine that you were in a courtroom watching the sentencing of a young man who was found guilty for several heinous crimes: robbery; aggravated assault. Open and shut case and so the judge declares the sentence. But then, after he brings down the gavel, you see him stand up, take off his legal vestments, and then walk over to the young man and say, "My son (he's the boy's daddy). You are guilty, but I will take this for you." And then place the handcuffs on himself and delivers himself over to the bailiff to pay the penalty." That's not a perfect analogy, and that could never happen in our legal system, but that is essentially what Jesus did. He got involved.

2. **A champion who saves (2:10, 14-15)**

- Vs. 10, says he is the "founder" of our salvation, but that word should really be translated "champion" or "deliverer." Some of your Bibles say "Captain."
- Jump down to vs. 14, where the writer picks up this image again: **[14] Since therefore the children share in flesh and**

blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

- In the old days, fights were often settled by selecting a representative to fight on behalf of the army. Think Hector and Achilles. Jesus fought death on our behalf and defeated it.
- Or the best picture of this is David and Goliath. A giant that terrifies everyone. David, a little unassuming shepherd boy, takes a very unlikely weapon and goes out and slays the giant while everyone else stands on the sidelines and watches. **David was their champion.** This was a picture of Jesus, who won the battle against the real giant, Goliath, while we all stood on the sidelines and didn't lift a finger to help Him!
- And in so doing he delivered us from the one thing we are all most terrified of: death.
 - In our honest, sober moments, people admit this is what terrifies them.

Leo Tolstoy, *Confession*, "Something strange began to happen to me at age 50. I had a wife who loved me and whom I loved; I had a large estate which, without much effort on my part, increased; my name was respected, I enjoyed physical strength, and yet I could not live because of the knowledge of my coming death. The question, which brought me to the verge of suicide, sought an answer without which one cannot live.

Is there any meaning in life that my inevitable death does not destroy? Today or tomorrow death will come to those I love, and then to me. Soon not only I will not exist and but eventually no one will exist who will remember anything I have written or done. Why then go on with the effort? What is all for? What does it all lead to? What difference does it make whether or not I do this thing or that thing or nothing at all? So I could give no rational meaning to any single

action or even to my whole life. But what was so surprising was how we can fail to see this. For a time it is possible to live intoxicated with life but as soon as one is sober, it is impossible not to see that life in the face of death is a fraud, and a stupid fraud at that. How often I have been told, 'oh you cannot understand the meaning of life so don't think about it, just live.' But I no longer can do that.¹

- The fear of death keeps us in captivity.
 - Sigmund Freud, who gave occasional nuggets of wisdom sandwiched between mountains of nonsense... said that the fear of death dominates our consciousness: On the one hand, he said, we have a death wish—feelings of guilt, shame, not living up to what we ought to; on the other hand there is an enormous fear of death, it seems like the end of everything; the unknown. Our response is to repress the whole conflict. We hate to think about it.
 - But it keeps us in captivity...
 - Death is terrifying because you feel like it is the end. If you think that, there is an enormous pressure to experience everything you can right now. And if you miss out on something, you are bitter. If you're single, or you don't find happiness in love. You get desperate, because this life is your only shot.
 - Or you start to panic when you see yourself aging... because you recognize it is the process of dying. So women botox their face and wear clothes completely inappropriate for a woman their age; and men go out and buy a red convertible and start unbuttoning their shirts down to their navels.
 - Or when you get older you start to obsess about building a legacy: be remembered.
 - Sometimes you are terrified of death because you fear the judgment of God... and so you start

obsessing about appeasing him and wondering if you've done enough to go to heaven.

- Our champion took our greatest fear and put it away! And he did it all by Himself.
 - And it wasn't like this was easy for Him. (*Gethsemane: (1) horror; (2) overcome with sorrow, to the point of death; (3) sweat great drops of blood: hematuridosis.*)
 - But as the song we sing says, "He conquered death by death."
- And now, death's power has been defeated and he's taking the fear out of it.
 - When I stand by the grave for a newborn baby and I look at a grieving family... yes, there is grief, but there is hope. In Christ, they will see that baby again, not as they were, but as God created them to be. (*What's it like to walk into heaven and see the child that you lost fully grown, having become everything you'd hoped they'd be?*)
 - When I look at people who really have missed out. I can say, "This deprivation, this suffering that you experience—it is not ultimate." The Bible says that "eye has not seen; nor ear heard; nor has even entered into the heart of man the glory of the things God has prepared for those who love Him."
 - *The partial things you missed out on here you will experience in fullness there.*
- Our enemy's greatest weapon—the weapon within all other weapons—was death. Our champion defeated it.
- And Paul says, "Oh death, now, where is thy sting? Grave, where is your victory? "Disease, where is your finality? Disappointment, failure, rejection, where is your devastation? Loneliness, where is your bitterness?" Christ has removed *death from death*. He is the only religious leader to have done that. The only religious leader to have gone into the grave and come back!

¹ I am indebted to Tim Keller's sermon on Heb 2, "Brother, Captain, King" here.

3. A brother who is not ashamed of us (2:13)

- I was trying to think of how to ask this question sensitively... but do you ever have somebody in your family you were just ashamed of? *The weird uncle. Maybe it was a parent.* Everybody who had a younger sibling remembers when you were in middle school and being embarrassed by the younger sibling... your own hold on coolness was so fragile you couldn't sustain their uncoolness.
- You were the family member Jesus should have been ashamed of. But he wasn't. He proudly identified with you; He claimed you. He said, "That's my brother!"
- I love looking sometimes through Jesus' genealogy. It was common in those days for kings to publish their genealogies, and 1 of the things they would do is try to show all the powerful people in their ancestry. You would say, "Wow, this guy comes from a powerful line!" If there were somebody embarrassing in your ancestry you'd just kind of leave them out of the official genealogy. But then you read Jesus' genealogy and you see things like:
 - Rahab, a prostitute.
 - Unwed mothers.
 - A girl who was raped by her uncle.
 - David's illegitimate son born out of adultery.
 - People who failed and embarrassed themselves.
 - *One of our campus pastors pointed out that Jesus' genealogy was filled with the HOPUD.*
 - These were the people Jesus included in His genealogy. He was not ashamed. They were His brothers and sisters.
- In fact, one of my favorite resurrection scenes (John 20:17), Jesus to Mary in the Garden, "Go and tell my brothers that they have raised." Of all the things to call them! They had just forsaken Him! Every single one of them! I would have been like, "Go tell those slack, cowardly, dolts that I resurrected just like I told them 100 times I would." That would be the "Gospel according to J.D." But He chose the

word, "brothers." "*Go tell my brothers I have risen.*" He was not ashamed to own them.

- He's not ashamed to own you!

4. A priest who can help (2:17-18)

- "(He became) a merciful and faithful **high priest**... to make propitiation for the sins of the people. [18] For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.
- Now, this can be a confusing verse for a few reasons.
 - First, people say, "Why did his suffering enable him to help us? Was He not able to help us before that?"
 - Or look back up at vs. 10, "*He made the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering*"? Wasn't He perfect before that?
- Yes, He was. It wasn't like God "learned" something by being tempted or by suffering. He wasn't like, "*Oh, that's why they like that so much!*" God has always known everything. He couldn't be more perfect than He already was.
- His temptation and suffering enabled Him to help us in at least 2-3 ways:
 - Psychologically, it helps us to know that when we pray, we pray to a God who has felt everything we ever feel.
 - He knows what the lure of temptation is like, first hand.
 - He knows what it is like to be tired and hungry.
 - He knows what it is like to weep, not really even understanding the will of the Father in a certain situation (Like he did at the grave of Lazarus in John 11)
 - He knows what it is like to experience betrayal and rejection by a dysfunctional family
 - Or be stabbed in the back by friends—close friends; ministry friends
 - He knew what it was like to be single long after the rest of his friends got married. The Gospels record Him going to all kinds of weddings, well

after he was in his 30's when most Jewish men were married with several kids...

- He was like, "Always the wine-maker, never the groom."
- Those of you who are single, it may help you to realize that every time you pray, you are praying to a 33-year old single adult.
- He knew disappointment in ministry (Matthew 23:37). A kind of failure.
- He knew the grief of having a child reject Him and walk out on Him... In that story He told of the prodigal son, he was the abandoned father!²
- He knows what it was like to be a rejected marriage partner.
- **He understands. And sometimes just knowing that He knows firsthand helps us.** When you go through pain you want to talk to somebody who has felt what you felt. He felt it all!
- And we know that because He experienced it, He can be moved by it.³
- Here's the other thing: because He suffered and was tempted but without sin, He can help us now without condemnation.
 - Whenever we go to God, there's always a question... is He condemning me? 1 John 1:9
 - I don't always know what God is doing in pain and suffering. But because of Christ I know He's not mad at me. He couldn't be. He poured out all of His wrath on Christ so that there is nothing left for me but love and acceptance.
- And because He was tempted like I am but without sin, I know that my ultimate victory is guaranteed.
 - Some of you are so overwhelmed by your struggles with sin. There's some things you just

don't seem to be able to get control of. **Some addiction; pornography; some bad habit.**

- Christ seated at the right hand of God shows you that ultimate victory is yours. Your guilt is as far away as the East is from the West and your victory over the power of sin in your life is as secure as Christ's position at the right hand of God.

JESUS: (1) A king who got involved; (2) a champion who saves; (3) a brother who is not ashamed; (4) a priest who can help.

This is who Jesus is to you. Or, at least, who He wants to be if you will let Him.

I love how the author shows you how remarkable this is:

[16] For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.

- You've got something the angels are jealous of. Angels can't be saved. About 1/3 of the angels rebelled against God, too. But Jesus didn't take on angel flesh. He could have. He could have become angel and not human. But He chose to take on ours.
- **1 Peter** says that the angels long to look into the gospel! Think about that: angels—beings that stand all day long before the throne of God, *long to feel the love that you feel in the gospel!*
- **On our TV shows**, angels always seem special and close to God. The angels don't look at it that way. They envy us. They probably have a show up there, "*Touched by a Human.*"

So, that's what the writer repeats over and over throughout this book. Whatever is going on; whatever you struggle with: **Look to Jesus!**

² Nouwen, *Return of the Prodigal Son*, 128

³ John Owen, *On Mortification of Sin*, 134. Ed. Justin Taylor.

- **Do you lack courage?** Look at Jesus seated upon the throne. His opinion is the only one that matters! If He is for you, who can be against you?
- **Are you overwhelmed with despair?** Look at the resurrected Jesus! How can you be in despair when your champion, king, brother, and friend reign supreme?
- **Are you lonely?** Your brother and your friend will never leave you or forsake you.
- **Are you discouraged at your lack of victory over sin?** *When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there, who made an end of all my sin!*
- How about this one: **Can you not give up control?** Look at Jesus. Can't you trust Him? If there was one person you could ever trust, even more than yourself, it would be Him! You can let go of yourself to Him, you control freak.
- **Are you struggling in faith? Striving to understand?** Me too. Look at the glory of Jesus. I can't explain all, but I can show you a God who conquered our greatest enemy and reveals His plans for good for us and is now seated on the throne of the universe.

Whatever you lack—what you need is not a new command; a new teaching; a new willpower or a new motivation: it is a Savior in Whom to trust and find refuge.

That's the difference between the gospel and religion. Religion takes a look at your problem and tells you to do better; try harder; the gospel tells you to just look upon Jesus and what He's done.

All of your life, you've been told: get to know yourself; find the strength within. Scripture says, "No. Get to know Jesus. Knowing Him will do more good for you than knowing yourself.

- Saw a church the other day who had the tagline: **Discover the champion in you.** Boring. Why don't you discover the

champion in Scripture. Only in the light of His victory will you find yours!

- It is impossible, once you've seen the glory of Jesus, to point people any longer back to themselves.
- That's why I've told you that the goal of every sermon is worship. I don't want you to leave with a bunch of things you should be doing for God; I want you to leave in awe of God. There should come a time in every sermon when the pen goes down and the eyes go upward and you worship.
- *When that happens, all the things in your life that need to change will, for the most part, change automatically.*

One last point: **The sight of Jesus creates a new family**

- The church should be the most compassionate, inclusive people on earth. If you study church history, despite its warts, you'll see that it has been.
- ***The sight of who Jesus was for us changes us into becoming like that for our community.***
- Church:
 - How could anybody who knows Jesus be racist? Racism is built on the idea that we are superior. Jesus really was better and He came and included us.
 - How could anybody who knows Jesus exclude others? When we deserved to be excluded, Jesus came to include us, at great personal cost to Himself.
- ***We should be the most forgiving community on earth!***
 - Amendment. Some of you are glad; some of you are disheartened.
 - Whether or not we should serve, love and protect our gay neighbors has never been in question.
 - Jesus washed our feet, we should wash theirs. He laid down His life for us; we should lay down our lives for theirs.
- ***We should be the most generous people on earth.*** What did Jesus do for you when He had riches? He emptied Himself so that He could save us. What do we do with our stuff? Empty ourselves so others can be saved! And we do it freely, without fear of loss, because we know that anything

we fail to experience down here, God makes up for us up there.

Prayer

Heads bowed. I invite you now to look at Jesus. A king who got involved; a champion who saved from your greatest fear; a brother who was not ashamed; and a priest who can help.

- **Have you come to Him?**
 - Can I tell you... those of you who haven't been in church, or aren't really in a relationship with God? *This is what you've been searching for!* You may not have known it. All your life you've been looking for his king, this champion, this brother, this priest!
 - Some of you are worried about becoming a Jesus freak; got to maintain control. Look at Jesus, and then just respond based on what you see Him as worthy of. You've been thinking of Christianity as a new lifestyle. The Bible presents it as a relationship with a glorious Person! It comes so naturally.
- **Christian: Are you responding rightly to Him now that you know Him?** What is the proper response to the King who got involved; the champion who won on our behalf; the brother who is not ashamed; and the priest who can help?